

# Christian Liberty

As it was

SOBERLY DESIRED

IN A

# LETTER

TO CERTAIN

# FORREIGN STATES,

Upon

Occasion of their late Severity to several of their

*Inhabitants*, meerly for their Dissent Perswasion

and Practice in Point of Faith and Wor-

ship towards God.

---

*Made publick on the behalf of the present suffering Dissenters  
within this Kingdom.*

---

Printed in the Year 1674.

---

CHANDLER

CHANDLER

AND

CHANDLER

CHANDLER

CHANDLER

CHANDLER

CHANDLER

CHANDLER

CHANDLER

CHANDLER

CHANDLER

CHANDLER

CHANDLER

CHANDLER

TO THE  
**Supream Council**  
 OF THE  
**S T A T E S, &c.**

*The King of Kings, and Lord of Lords, who is  
 God of all the Families of the Earth, incline  
 your Hearts to Justice, Mercy and Truth.*

**T**He Noise of your severe Treatment of several Persons  
 that are Inhabitants of your State, reproachfully term'd  
**QUAKERS**, hath reached these Parts, and fill'd several  
 with Compassion and Surprize: *Compassion,*  
 to hear of the \* Miseries of Men Innocent  
 & upright, against whom you have nothing  
 to object, but the pure *Exercise of their Con-*  
*science to God: Surprize,* That you, a *Pro-*  
*testant-State,* should employ your Civil Pow-  
 er to Deter, Punish and grievously Afflict  
 Men for Answering the Convictions of  
 their Consciences, and Acting according  
 to the best of their Understandings. Methinks you should not be  
 oblivious of your own Condition in the *Lays* of your Ancestors,  
 who, you think, with great Reason & Justice strenuously advocated

\* Our Account says,  
*Some were cruelly beaten  
 by Order; others Bani-  
 shed; some put in a Dun-  
 geon, and fed with Bread  
 and Water only; several  
 find greater sums of Mo-  
 ney, it is thought, then they  
 had to pay.*

the Cause of *Liberty of Conscience* against the *Popes Bulls* and the *Spanish Inquisition*; how did they *Antichristian* all Force on Conscience, or Punishment for *Non-Conformity*? Their own many and large Apologies, and particularly, their Demands at the *Diets of Norimberg* and *Spira*, are pregnant Proofs in the Case: and your Practice doth not lessen the Weight of their Reasons; on the contrary, it aggravates your Unkindness, let me say, Injustice.

*Protestants* (and such you glory to be thought) got their Name by protesting against Imposition; and will you turn Imposers? They condemned it; and will you practise it? They thought it a Mark peculiar to the *Beast*, and can you repute it the Care of a *Christian Magistracy*? I mean, that Persons must not live under your Government, unless they receive your Mark in their *Fore-head* or *Right-hand*? which in plainer Terms is, to submit their Consciences to your Edicts, and to ask your Leave, *What Religion they should be of*. Remember, that *Faith is the Gift of God*; and, that *What is not of Faith is Sin*: Nothing can be more Unreasonable, then to compel Men to believe against their Belief, or to trouble them for practising what they believe, when it thwarts not the Moral Law of God.

You doubtless take your selves to be *Christians*, and would esteem it no little Injury to be otherwise represented; yet what more *Unchristian*, then to use External Force, to sway the Consciences of Men about the Exercise of Religious Worship?

*CHRIST Jesus*, the Lord and Author of the *Christian Religion*, censur'd his own Disciples, that would have had Fire from Heaven to destroy those that conform'd not to what their blessed Master taught: Are you surer of your Religion? Are you better *Christians*? Or, have you more *Christian* Authority, then they that were the chosen Witnesses of *Jesus*? However remember, they call'd but for Fire from Heaven; and can you kindle Fire on Earth to devour them? Them, I say, that are of your own People, meerly for their Religious Dissent from you. Doubtless, if that was then thought

no fit Argument to induce Men to Conformity by him that was wiser then *Solomon*, it reflects greatly upon your Modesty and Prudence, that you should find out new Wayes, or rather old exploded ones to effect so ill a Design. Besides, you do not say, you know all you ought to know, or that there is nothing further to be revealed, have a Care therefore, that you persecute not Angels, by being harsh to that which you call Strange: Think not ill, much less speak, and least of all act that which is so against what you do not perfectly understand. I am well perswaded, that those you inflict such severe Penalties upon, mean well in what they believe (to be sure much better then you think they do, or else you are extremely to blame) and that the Reason of their present Distance from you, is not to introduce or insinuate Dangerous or Exotick Opinions; but to live a Life of more Holiness, Purity and Self-Denial, then before: They do not think that you walk up to your own Principles, and have Reason to believe that the Power of Godliness is much lost among you; and having long lain under a Decay and Languishing of Soul for Want of true spiritual Nourishment, they have now betaken themselves to that Heavenly Gift & Grace of God in themselves for Divine Satisfaction, even that Holy Anointing that is able to teach them all things necessary for them to know, as the Blessed Apostle speaks; and they find the Joys of the Holy Ghost in so doing: And I am perswaded, they are not less Peaceable, Sober, Just and Neighbourly then formerly, and altogether as consistent with the Prosperity of Civil Society, and I am sure, it is both found and confest among us here by some Men of *Quality, Learning and Virtue*. Further, be pleased to consider with your selves, that you justify the ancient Persecutions of the *Christians* and first Reformers, whose Superiors thought as ill of them, as you do of these Men; nay, you show the *Papists* what to do in their Dominions to your own Brethren. Do as you would be done by: if you would have Liberty, give it; you know that God's Witness in your Hearts dictates this to you as an Immutable Law.

Could I



Could you give Faith, it were more excusable for you to punish such as should resist; but since that is impossible, the other is unreasonable; for 'tis to afflict Men for not being what they can't be, unless they turn *Hypocrites*: That is the highest pitch your coercive Power can arrive at; for never did it convert or preserve one Soul to God; instead thereof, it offers Violence upon Conscience, and puts a Man either upon the Denial of his Faith and Reason, or being destroyed for acting according to them: But what greater Disproportion can there be, then what lyeth between the *Intellect* of Man, and *Prisons, Fines and Banishments*? They inform no Man's Judgment, resolve no Doubts, convince no Understanding: The Power of Perswasion is not to be found in any such Barbarous Actions, no more then the Doctrine of *Christianity*. This Course destroys the Bodies and \* Estates of Men, instead of saving their Souls: Were they in the Wrong, *which they repute themselves Chardians of,* it would become you to use God's Weapon, his Sword of the Spirit, that saveth the Creature, and slayeth the Evil in him; This Course tends to Heart-Burnings and Destruction; I am sure it is no Gospel Argument.

I beseech you for the sake of that Lord *Jesus Christ*, that suffer'd so patiently for his own Religion, and so sharply prohibited making other men to suffer for theirs, that you would have a Care, how you exercise Power over mens Consciences. My Friends, *Conscience* is God's Throne in Man, and the Power of it, his Prerogative: 'Tis to usurp his Authority, and boldly ascend his Throne to sit Lords over it. Were their Conversation Scandalous, and Destructive to the Good of your State, you were to be held excusable; But verely, no man of Mercy and Conscience, can defend your Practice upon poor Men so peaceable and Inoffensive. *Gamaliel* will rise up in Judgment against you, if you persevere in this course. Do not you help to fill the Catalogue of *Persecutors*, in much Love I intreat you; but as becomes *Christian men & true Protestants*, leave men

men to their particular Perswasions of Affairs relative of the other World, which have no ill Aspect on the Affairs of this; but Vice hath an evil Consequence as to both: Therefore punish *Vice*, and affect *Truth* and *Righteousness*, and bend not your Civil Power to Torment Religious Dissenters; but to retrieve good Life, lamentably lost amidst the great Pretences that are made to *Religion*. Doubtless, *Magistracy* was both ordained of God, and elected by Men, to be a *Terror to Evil-doers*, and not to them that do well, though of different Judgments. You oppugn the *Roman Church* for assuming *Infallibility* to her self, and yet your own Practice maketh you guilty of the same Presumption, or worse: For, either you do exercise that Severity upon an Infallible Knowledge, or you do not; if you do, you take that to your selves, your Principles deny to any *Church* whatever, which is a Contradiction; if you do not, you punish People for not conforming to what you your selves deny any Certainty about: And how do you know but you compel them to that which is false, as well as that which is true? Verely, this *Dilemma* is not easily avoided, as well as that this inhuman Practice will stain your Profession, infame your Government, and bring a Blot upon your Posterity.

Remember that they are Men as well as your selves, born free, and have equal Plea to Natural and Civil common Priviledges with your selves: The different Perswasion of their Consciences about Things relating to another Life, can no wayes render them unfit for this; it neither Unmans nor Uncivilizes them. They have the same Right to their Liberty and Property as ever, having by no Practice of theirs in the least forfeited any of those human Advantages, the Great Charters of Nature and Scripture have conferr'd upon them: And the *Opulency* of your Neighbours, and *Prosperity* of their Affairs, prove to you that *Indulgence* is not inconsistent with *Policy*; howbeit, you have now tryed the *Sincerity* of their Procedure by what you have already inflicted, and they sustained; Let the Time past suffice, and make them not Sacrifices  
for

For their conscientious *Constancy*. If they are in the Wrong, 'tis more then they know: Will you persecute Men for being what they must be, if they will be true to themselves? this were great Violence, rather Commiserate, then thus violently Compel them. I beseech you, seek some cheaper Way to accommodate your selves, then by their Destruction, who are so very remote from seeking yours. *Oh! the Day will come, wherein one Act of Tenderneſs about Maſters of Conſcience, ſhall find a better Reward, then all the Severity by which Men uſe to propagate their Perſuaſions in the World; and there is great Reason for it, ſince the one flows from the Saviour, the other, from the Deſtroyer of Men. In fine, Let your Moderation be known unto all Men, for the Lord is at hand, whoſe Reward is with him; and he will recompence every Man, Family, State, Kingdom and Empire, according to the Nature of their Works, committed in this mortal Body; at whole Bar it ſhall never be laid to your Charge, that out of Fear of taking God's Office out of his Hands, and being unmerciful to tender Conſciences, you admitted Men of differing Judgments to dwell quietly among you; truly, you cannot be too tender in this Point.*

Imitate the God of Nature and Grace, by being propitious to all; *his Sun ſhineth on all, his Rain falls on all, he gives Life and Being to all, his Grace viſits all, and in Times of Ignorance he winketh: And though ſuch you may repute ours, I hope you cannot think you wink at it, who make ſuch broad Tokens of your Diſpleaſure. Oh! how forbearing and merciful is he towards you? Have you ſo lately eſcaped the Wrath of Enemies, and can you already thus ſharply treat your Friends? Had he enter'd into Judgment with you, what had become of you? Let his Goodneſs to you prevail with you, to expreſs Clemency to others, that ſo the Great God of the whole Earth, even the God of the Spirits of all Fleſh, who reſpects not the Perſons of the Rich, Poor, or Powerful in Judgment, may ſhow you Mercy in the day of his Righteous Judgments, Amen.*

London, the 14th }  
December, 1674. }



1  
 2  
 3  
 4  
 5  
 6  
 7  
 8  
 9  
 10  
 11  
 12  
 13  
 14  
 15  
 16  
 17  
 18  
 19  
 20  
 21  
 22  
 23  
 24  
 25  
 26  
 27  
 28  
 29  
 30  
 31  
 32  
 33  
 34  
 35  
 36  
 37  
 38  
 39  
 40  
 41  
 42  
 43  
 44  
 45  
 46  
 47  
 48  
 49  
 50  
 51  
 52  
 53  
 54  
 55  
 56  
 57  
 58  
 59  
 60  
 61  
 62  
 63  
 64  
 65  
 66  
 67  
 68  
 69  
 70  
 71  
 72  
 73  
 74  
 75  
 76  
 77  
 78  
 79  
 80  
 81  
 82  
 83  
 84  
 85  
 86  
 87  
 88  
 89  
 90  
 91  
 92  
 93  
 94  
 95  
 96  
 97  
 98  
 99  
 100  
 101  
 102  
 103  
 104  
 105  
 106  
 107  
 108  
 109  
 110  
 111  
 112  
 113  
 114  
 115  
 116  
 117  
 118  
 119  
 120  
 121  
 122  
 123  
 124  
 125  
 126  
 127  
 128  
 129  
 130  
 131  
 132  
 133  
 134  
 135  
 136  
 137  
 138  
 139  
 140  
 141  
 142  
 143  
 144  
 145  
 146  
 147  
 148  
 149  
 150  
 151  
 152  
 153  
 154  
 155  
 156  
 157  
 158  
 159  
 160  
 161  
 162  
 163  
 164  
 165  
 166  
 167  
 168  
 169  
 170  
 171  
 172  
 173  
 174  
 175  
 176  
 177  
 178  
 179  
 180  
 181  
 182  
 183  
 184  
 185  
 186  
 187  
 188  
 189  
 190  
 191  
 192  
 193  
 194  
 195  
 196  
 197  
 198  
 199  
 200  
 201  
 202  
 203  
 204  
 205  
 206  
 207  
 208  
 209  
 210  
 211  
 212  
 213  
 214  
 215  
 216  
 217  
 218  
 219  
 220  
 221  
 222  
 223  
 224  
 225  
 226  
 227  
 228  
 229  
 230  
 231  
 232  
 233  
 234  
 235  
 236  
 237  
 238  
 239  
 240  
 241  
 242  
 243  
 244  
 245  
 246  
 247  
 248  
 249  
 250  
 251  
 252  
 253  
 254  
 255  
 256  
 257  
 258  
 259  
 260  
 261  
 262  
 263  
 264  
 265  
 266  
 267  
 268  
 269  
 270  
 271  
 272  
 273  
 274  
 275  
 276  
 277  
 278  
 279  
 280  
 281  
 282  
 283  
 284  
 285  
 286  
 287  
 288  
 289  
 290  
 291  
 292  
 293  
 294  
 295  
 296  
 297  
 298  
 299  
 300  
 301  
 302  
 303  
 304  
 305  
 306  
 307  
 308  
 309  
 310  
 311  
 312  
 313  
 314  
 315  
 316  
 317  
 318  
 319  
 320  
 321  
 322  
 323  
 324  
 325  
 326  
 327  
 328  
 329  
 330  
 331  
 332  
 333  
 334  
 335  
 336  
 337  
 338  
 339  
 340  
 341  
 342  
 343  
 344  
 345  
 346  
 347  
 348  
 349  
 350  
 351  
 352  
 353  
 354  
 355  
 356  
 357  
 358  
 359  
 360  
 361  
 362  
 363  
 364  
 365  
 366  
 367  
 368  
 369  
 370  
 371  
 372  
 373  
 374  
 375  
 376  
 377  
 378  
 379  
 380  
 381  
 382  
 383  
 384  
 385  
 386  
 387  
 388  
 389  
 390  
 391  
 392  
 393  
 394  
 395  
 396  
 397  
 398  
 399  
 400  
 401  
 402  
 403  
 404  
 405  
 406  
 407  
 408  
 409  
 410  
 411  
 412  
 413  
 414  
 415  
 416  
 417  
 418  
 419  
 420  
 421  
 422  
 423  
 424  
 425  
 426  
 427  
 428  
 429  
 430  
 431  
 432  
 433  
 434  
 435  
 436  
 437  
 438  
 439  
 440  
 441  
 442  
 443  
 444  
 445  
 446  
 447  
 448  
 449  
 450  
 451  
 452  
 453  
 454  
 455  
 456  
 457  
 458  
 459  
 460  
 461  
 462  
 463  
 464  
 465  
 466  
 467  
 468  
 469  
 470  
 471  
 472  
 473  
 474  
 475  
 476  
 477  
 478  
 479  
 480  
 481  
 482  
 483  
 484  
 485  
 486  
 487  
 488  
 489  
 490  
 491  
 492  
 493  
 494  
 495  
 496  
 497  
 498  
 499  
 500  
 501  
 502  
 503  
 504  
 505  
 506  
 507  
 508  
 509  
 510  
 511  
 512  
 513  
 514  
 515  
 516  
 517  
 518  
 519  
 520  
 521  
 522  
 523  
 524  
 525